



STATE OF WASHINGTON
PROFESSIONAL EDUCATOR STANDARDS BOARD
Old Capitol Building, PO Box 47236 · Olympia, WA 98504-3113 · (360) 725-6275

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE – July 10, 2002

Deadline nears for Teacher Test Registration

Applicants for admission to teacher preparation programs in Washington may have some summer homework to finish first. For the first time, prospective teacher must pass WEST-B, a state-mandated basic skills test, to be admitted to their chosen institution's preparation program. Registration for the test closes July 19. Late registration is also available.

This requirement applies to those seeking admission beginning in Fall 2002; candidates who have already been admitted to teacher preparation programs and who expect to start their studies in the 2002-2003 calendar year will not have to take the test scheduled for administration in seven locations across the state in August. Teachers from other states who are seeking certification must also pass the test, but can teach on a temporary permit issued by the state for one year before they must pass the WEST-B.

There is some latitude for applicants in this requirement: the higher education institution can make a judgment call and admit someone to a preparation program who has not passed the test. Before achieving certification in the state, however, the would-be educator must pass the basic skills test.

Applicants can find registration information and information on test objectives at www.west.nesinc.com.

After selecting National Evaluation Systems last September to create the Washington test, the Professional Educator Standards Board (PESB) has moved with deliberate speed to get the test ready for its first administration. During the last week of June, Washington educators, administrators, and faculty from public and private teacher preparation programs dedicated two days to a review of proposed test items for reading, writing, and math to make sure that items were accurate, appropriate, fair, and free of stereotypes. They pored over results from a survey designed to determine whether the knowledge being tested is what higher education faculty, principals, and teacher believe is necessary for teacher candidates.

The group of reviewers represented members from two different committees: a Fairness Committee whose members look at the items from the perspective of fairness to all candidates, regardless of heritage, and a Content Committee, for reading, writing, and math. The Content Committee was charged with reviewing all items to assure they measure skills an educator should have.

The decision to combine the committees for this round of review resulted in a deeper level of examination and discussion, concludes a committee member from Snoqualmie, who originally wore a Content Committee hat. (Committee members are not identified to assure the confidentiality of the process.) “There was a tug of war between the areas of concentration in the content committees. We made hard cases for the level of math literacy that was needed, as well as the reading and writing literacy. We tried to make this test as valid a test as we could.”

Math Teachers questioned terminology used such as genre and qualifying language. English teachers responded, “Using the word genre is like using the word equation.”

In some items, member of the Fairness Committee recommended word changes to ensure better understanding, for example, from “trunk” to “suitcase.” In other cases, said a committee member from Granger, the committee discarded a whole selection that appeared biased toward a group. “We looked at all of the questions and items to make sure they were fair, and not setting one group at a disadvantage or at more advantage.”

“There’s a lot of satisfaction to be gained,” a teacher on the committee concluded, “from knowing that we are devising something that will be useful in determining the preparedness of people in entering the profession.”

Washington joins 45 other states in requiring teachers to pass a basic skills test prior to certification.

All 22 of the state’s teacher preparation programs currently have some basic skills requirements for admission but these requirements vary considerably, explained Jennifer Wallace, PESB Executive Director. “PESB was charged with developing a uniform way to measure the basic skills competency of those teachers beginning their preparation for the classroom.”

Created by the Legislature in 2000, PESB is charged with responsibility for recommending policies related to recruitment, training, retention, and evaluation of educators.

#

Information:

David Anderson, Assessment Director, PESB
360-725-6277